



Pennsylvania Black Conference On Higher Education, Inc.

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Statement from PBCOHE President Rachael Banks on the Mass Shooting in Buffalo, NY

Over the weekend, we witnessed another senseless act of gun violence claim the lives of 10 innocent African-Americans at a Tops Friendly Markets store in a predominantly Black neighborhood of Buffalo, NY. The investigation is ongoing, but law enforcement reports indicate clear evidence that the shooting was racially motivated and that the perpetrator intentionally targeted the store with the explicit purpose of killing Black people. Our hearts ache for the victims' families and friends, and the community in Buffalo as they grapple with the aftermath of this horrific loss of life.

We honor the deceased by saying their names and remembering their lives: Celestine Chaney, Roberta A. Drury, Andre Mackneil, Katherine Massey, Margus D. Morrison, Deacon Heyward Patterson, Aaron Salter, Geraldine Talley, Ruth Whitfield, and Pearly Young.

Although PBCOHE is an apolitical organization, identity politics are a central tenet of this country. Let me be explicitly clear: White supremacy is deadly and dangerous, and people of color are not safe anywhere – not in our homes, churches, communities, or even at the grocery store on a Saturday afternoon. The radicalization of White nationalism, coupled with Congress' unwillingness to strengthen gun laws, is a fatal combination that will continue to result in the violent deaths of Black and Brown people until the laws are changed. America has always protected the personal freedoms of White people at the expense of people and communities of color, who are underprotected, underresourced, and undervalued.

I am so tired of thoughts and prayers, friends. I want action, accountability, and justice for the centuries of racial injustices perpetrated against us; but I would settle for a government that actually cares for *all* of its citizens, equally and compassionately, so that these ten innocent souls are the last to die this way.